CHILDREN'S MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

NO. 14 TOLEDO, OHIO JUNE, 1937

REPETITION OF SHAPES IN VAN GOYEN'S PAINTING

HOW VAN GOYEN COMPOSED A PICTURE

IT WAS many centuries before anyone knew how to make the picture post cards we buy at the places we visit today. But long ago the Dutch artists, travelling about their own little country, found it beautiful and began to make pictures of it. Some painted the people, others painted the fields and trees. One painted the towns. His name was Jan Van Goyen.

Like all true Dutchmen Jan deeply loved his country. Not only was he patriotic; he also loved the views stretching out on every side of him. He noticed the pleasant lowlands bordered by dykes. He saw the noisy towns with sailing boats beside their wharfs, and houses and shops of red brick, always clean and inviting. There were, too, the great arms of the windmills reaching into the sky. How often he must have watched the sky! It was

MASSES ALONG THE HORIZON TIE FOREGROUND TO SKY

always changing. Sometimes it was a clear blue. Often it was hung with grey mists, or against it the billowy clouds climbed slowly up behind a village.

Jan Van Goyen was not satisfied to live in one little corner of so beautiful a country. Even when he was scarcely more than a boy he began to wander from place to place. Traveling three hundred years ago was very different from what it is today, and probably Jan traveled most of the time on his own two feet.

As he rested on a low hill, or sat on a dyke, he, too, sketched the fields and the trees, and often he drew the towns which he saw in the distance. Few people had seen as many towns as he. Although they all had seen many changes of weather, few had noticed them as carefully, and still fewer were able to record them in paint so truthfully. When he finally carried home his pictures his friends must have wondered at all he had seen, and wondered especially at his beautiful way of drawing. From his sketches Jan painted the fine views of Holland for which he has become so famous.

Today some of his pictures have been placed in museums. You may see a very fine one, called Harbor View, hanging in the Toledo Museum of Art. We do not know which of the Dutch towns this

GRADUAL CHANGE FROM STRAIGHT TO CURVED LINES IN THE DESIGN

painting shows for Van Goyen has left no record of it. But we may be sure that the town appears to us as many Dutch people frequently saw it.

Sitting at the edge of the harbor, Van Goyen drew the cluster of buildings which stood behind the dykes across the bay. At that distance it seemed a quiet town. On this day it was not a colorful village for over it hung a mist, too thick to let much sunlight through. Van Goyen needed only a few colors to paint it. These he lightened and darkened and greyed until he was able to show air and sunlight, shadow and distance, so perfectly that, as you look at the painting today, you yourself can almost feel the dampness of the air.

A camera records on its film exactly what is before it. An artist may rearrange, in his picture, the things he sees before him, if doing so will make his painting more pleasing. We say that he designs or composes his picture. The lines on the illustrations here will suggest to you ways in which Van Goyen arranged the objects of his picture into a pleasing, balanced composition.

The first will show you how many times the sails have been repeated to form a design across the painting. Surely it was no accident that the arms of the windmills fitted into that shape also.

Because the line of the horizon was sharp enough to almost divide the painting in two Van Goyen used the sails to join the sky and water, and the reflection of the town to blend together the two parts.

Another illustration shows with what care Van Goyen planned the changes from straight to sharply curved edges. Across the water the thin sunlight and shadows form long horizontal patterns. The clouds near the horizon rise in slight curves, reaching upward, while those high in the sky billow into full large curves. It is the pattern across the water which expresses the quietness that Van Goyen felt.

Within reach of the spaces of light and shadow on the water he has arranged a boat or two—dark patterns against lighter areas. And the boats at the left also act as a balance for the town, which stretches out toward the right.

Having watched the sea since he was a child Van Goyen knew well how to paint the smooth flatness of quiet water. And he took care that in the mist the distant objects should almost fade from sight.

Today, three centuries after it was painted, this picture shows us as clearly as a photograph could how the Dutch towns looked long ago. And today this work of Van Goyen is treasured as a fine example of Dutch painting, and as a picture of great beauty.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

All boys and girls through junior high school age are invited to come to the free informal art activities conducted by the educational department of the Museum during the month of July.

Classes will begin on July 6. They will be held at the Museum each morning at nine o'clock and each afternoon at one o'clock with the exception of Saturday and Sunday.

Activities will vary to include story hours, talks illustrated by lantern slides and colored reproductions, and art talks in the galleries using the masterpieces in the Museum's collections. Free expression in various materials will add interest, and games based on art may occasionally be added to the program. Many of the activities will be carried on out of doors. The children's library will be available to young readers.